

VZCZCXYZ0018
PP RUEHWEB

DE RUEHMU #0045 0110019
ZNR UUUUU ZZH
P 110019Z JAN 06
FM AMEMBASSY MANAGUA
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 4857

INFO RUEHZA/WHA CENTRAL AMERICAN COLLECTIVE PRIORITY
RUCPDOG/DEPT OF COMMERCE WASHINGTON DC PRIORITY

UNCLAS MANAGUA 000045

SIPDIS

SENSITIVE
SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [SENV](#) [IWC](#) [EFIS](#) [NU](#)

SUBJECT: NICARAGUA FEELING HEAT FOR PRO-WHALING POSITION

¶1. (SBU) SUMMARY: Nicaragua's largest daily newspapers have recently published articles critical of the country's pro-whaling votes in the International Whaling Commission (IWC). The Executive Director of the National Fisheries Agency (ADPESCA) told ECONOFF that he has consequently become the target of increasing criticism by environmental groups. Despite having no whaling tradition, Nicaragua consistently votes in the IWC for the interests of Japan and other whaling nations. Discussing his government's support for whale hunting in the IWC, ADPESCA Executive Director Miguel Marengo combined familiar pro-whaling talking points with a blunt admission that Nicaragua was participating in a quid pro quo bargain with the Japanese. Japan is the third most generous bilateral donor to Nicaragua behind the U.S. and Sweden (another nation with strong whaling interests). Nicaragua has received an average of \$40 million annually in financial assistance from Japan since 1990, including recent funding to build docks for fishing vessels. There is no reason to believe that recent public criticism will result in a change in the GON position. END SUMMARY

¶2. (SBU) The front page of the daily newspaper 'El Nuevo Diario' on January 9 contained a photo of a Japanese vessel reeling in a bloody, harpooned whale under the headline, "Cruelty and Danger of Extinction." The article states that "the government of Nicaragua supports the hunting of whales on behalf of Japan and other industrialized nations, although this animal is in danger of extinction." Nicaragua's other leading newspaper 'La Prensa' has also recently featured opposition to Nicaragua's pro-whaling stance. Marengo declared that these articles and a host of critical websites are part of a campaign orchestrated by Greenpeace and other international environmental organizations to pressure Nicaragua to change its positions on the IWC. He also believes that left-wing organizations in Latin America are using environmentalism as a proxy issue to attack centrist and conservative governments.

¶3. (SBU) In defense of Nicaragua's position, Marengo repeated familiar pro-whale hunting talking points. He said that his country is "pro sustainable use" and would oppose the hunting of any endangered whale species based on "scientific evidence." He stated the GON view that species such as minke whales have been replenished, and therefore can be safely hunted. He further echoed the notion that the "replenishment of large predators harms the replenishment of endangered fish species since they are eaten by the whales."

¶4. (SBU) Marengo was candid about Nicaragua's quid pro quo understanding with Japan on the whaling issue. "Remember that Japan is a good ally of Nicaragua and that they provide almost \$50 million a year in assistance," he said. Marengo bluntly remarked that Nicaragua has taken a "You scratch my back and I'll scratch yours" approach to whaling with the

Japanese. (Comment: Part of the 2005-2006 aid package from Japan includes the construction of two docks for fishing boats in San Juan del Sur. End Comment)

¶5. (SBU) Marengo emphasized that the U.S. should not consider this one area of disagreement to be a cause for concern about overall relations between our two countries concerning fisheries issues. He pointed out that the GON is a close partner with the United States on issues related to tuna, shrimp, turtles and lobster. (Note: With the exception of the IWC, Nicaragua frequently supports U.S. proposals and candidates for positions in organizations such as the International Tuna Commission. End Note)

¶6. (SBU) COMMENT: While clearly annoyed with the public campaign to criticize the GON whaling position and him personally, Marengo gave no reason to believe that the GON will alter its strategic decision to align itself with Japanese interests on the International Whaling Commission.
TRIVELLI